Comprehensive Plans in other Cities:
Types of Plans, Why New Plans Were Developed, Plan Development

I. Introduction:

During the Summer of 2002, the Office of Planning conducted an assessment of comprehensive plans and the planning process of seven major cities across the United States. After extensive research, it was concluded that there was no other single city within or outside of the United States that would provide an adequate comparison for Washington, DC. No other national capital in the world faces the same planning and political challenges as DC, in terms of size, international recognition and representation. Keeping the distinctions between DC and other cities in mind, this research is intended to inform OP and the Task Force on other ideas or strategies that could be considered for the DC Comprehensive Plan.

Information gathered from each city included: a demographic profile of the city; the process of developing the comprehensive plan; the institutional relationship between the planning department, the mayor, city council and planning commission; the content of the comprehensive plan; the organization and legibility of the plan; and the process for amending the plan.

This document is tailored to discuss four areas: 1) the types of Comprehensive Plans in these cities; 2) why these cities developed new plans; 3) the process used for developing the plans; and 4) the resources used in plan development. Specific information on other aspects of these plans (such as the content of these plan and the amendment process) will be shared in other documents for future Task Force meetings. First however, we will describe the rationale for the cities that were selected.

II. The Cities And Why They Were Chosen:

Interviews conducted with a variety of Office of Planning staff and well-known planning experts generated an initial list of cities for consideration. Only citywide comprehensive plans were considered, as county or regional plans or small area plans was determined to be inadequate for comparison and evaluation. From this list the following cities were chosen for analysis:

- Atlanta
- Boston
- Denver
- Kansas City

- Minneapolis
- Portland
- Seattle

The method for selecting these cities was to find cities of similar size that are addressing similar issues that DC faces. In addition, some cities were chosen for their successful and innovative planning history. It should be noted, however, that we acknowledge that the cities chosen for this project do not exactly match the Washington, DC area in all characteristics, demographic or otherwise.

Specific demographic considerations were also a driving factor in plan consideration. The cities selected have similar population sizes and are facing some similar challenges as DC. For instance, some cities are trying to address issues pertaining to population growth (they were either losing population or needing to accommodate additional residents). This issue is relevant for DC as it lost population for several decades (recent research in the last few years indicates that the population may have leveled off).

The specific issues or trends that aided in the selection of these cities were:

	2000 Population	Issues City is Facing	Portions of Plan of Particular Interest
Atlanta	416,474	Extensive job and residential growth at regional level; socio-economic divide	How/whether Atlanta addresses regional tension; socio-economic issues
Boston	589,141	Transportation issues, housing affordability, need for new schools	Focus on physical issues of development, housing
Denver	554,636	Population growth, economic changes, housing affordability	Focus on sustainability and social equity
Kansas City	441,545	History of population decline (recent turnaround), economic shifts to services, declining tax base	Focus on social equity; citizen involvement; interdependence of policies
Minneapolis	382,618	Decreases in population although # of households remained the same, change in population mix	Regional cooperation; citizen involvement; focus on population
Portland	529,121	Channeling growth	Growth management; social equity
Seattle	563,374	Pressure to accommodate additional population growth	Urban villages; sustainability; social equity
Washington	572,059	Socioeconomic divide in city, high growth outside city, underutilized land around metro and waterfront	

III. The Types of Comprehensive Plans:

Two different approaches were used to determine the types of comprehensive plans. One approach was to determine the content of the plan – the kinds of issues each plan addressed (e.g., a plan that covers social issues or a plan that covers physical issues). The second approach is to determine the intent of each plan (e.g., setting forth a vision or publicly articulating a to-do list).

Content of a Plan: When thinking about a comprehensive plan and its implementation, it is helpful to determine the content of the plan because it establishes the kinds of issues to be addressed in a long-term plan. It also determines what actors (specific government agencies, neighborhoods, developers, etc) need to be responsible for its monitoring and implementation. There are three types of plans as defined by their content:

A physical plan A plan that address the physical nature of a city, such as land use, transportation, public facilities and historic preservation.

A social plan   A plan focuses on the social nature of a city, such as human development or human services.

A hybrid plan   A plan that includes both physical and social components.

A physical plan for instance, would require the involvement of a planning department, land regulation and permitting offices, local land use boards and commissions, community development corporations and others. A social plan would require the involvement of human service agencies, human service providers, local hospitals, schools and more.

Intent of a Plan: It is also important to be clear about what a city is intending to accomplish and how best a comprehensive plan can help reach those goals. There are five types of plans as defined by their intent. Lewis D. Hopkins, a researcher and professor at the University of Illinois and chair of the Planning Accreditation Board, identifies five typologies. In general, they are:

Agenda plans: These are action plans that publicly record a "to-do list". Agendas plans help when there are too many actions to remember or when there is a benefit in gaining trust among people or legitimating actors as accountable.

Policy plans: These are plans that establish a straightforward framework for action, such as "if X happens, then Y must be done". In other words, policy plans identify standard responses for repeated instances of the same situation.

Vision plans: These are plans that provide an image of what could or should be. A vision plan describes a powerful idea that motivates people but does not work out the details of how all the parts of the vision work together. In other words, a vision plan would articulate what should happen and why but state that strategies for implementing the vision will be determined in the future.

Design plans ("one solution" plan): Design plans provide the detailed working-out of all of the pieces of the vision on paper so that all of the components that relate to each other have been resolved in one particular way. In other words, design plans presuppose to know all the answers.

Strategic plans (alternative scenario plan): While a design plan presupposes what the solution should be, the strategic plan has more of a decision-tree approach, acknowledging that important variables may change that will affect what needs to be implemented. A strategic plan does not lead to a fixed solution but has developed contingency decisions and actions.

While most plans will incorporate more than one of these types (some can even have pieces of each), for the purposes of our exercise, we took the top one or more types that appeared to be the main emphasis of their plan.

The matrix below lists these two evaluative measures for each of the seven cities.

City:	Content of Plan:	Intent of Plan:	Comments:
Atlanta	hybrid	Agenda, Policy	Describes policies for areas such as housing and then details the CIP budget actions that help promote policies.
Boston	physical	Vision, Agenda	Describes vision for city in many areas, such as new schools and transit-centered villages and then provides a list of actions to be implemented by government, institutions, non-profits and others.
Denver	hybrid	Vision, Agenda, Policy	Describes visions for the city for each of the subsections within Long-Term Physical Environment and Long-Term Human Environment sections (such as land use, mobility, and education) then lists actions and policies
Kansas City	hybrid	Design, Agenda	Takes specific goals and develops a series of interconnected steps to achieve that goal (e.g., promoting heritage tourism required several interconnected steps)
Minneapolis	hybrid	Vision, Policy, Agenda	Provides vision for growth, and policies to support vision, then follows with action steps.
Portland	hybrid	Policy	Starts with a one-page vision, but primary emphasis of plan is providing policies to be followed for repeated actions or requests.
Seattle	hybrid	Policy, Design	Largely a document that articulates policies. Some parts of the plan have an integrated solution, such as urban villages.
Washington	hybrid	Policy, Agenda	Combination of lists of actions and policies to guide future decision-making

As described in the above matrix, the majority of the cities evaluated are hybrid plans – addressing both physical and social issues. Many cities highlighted that creating a more "holistic" plan was fundamental to improving the health and welfare of all aspects of their city.

When reviewing the intent of these plans, most cities have a combination of types in order meet their particular objectives. While most plans include many "intents", the above matrix highlights the core type(s) that drive the plan:

- Agendas are the most common type, with some cities providing a matrix or a detailed listing of actions after each goal.
- Policy-type plans are also quite prominent, as these cities wanted to clearly articulate strong directives for the long-term (if X happens, then Y should happen).
- Vision and design are less common but when used, helped provide verbal or illustrated guidance for the city, moving it forward to a new direction.

V. Why These Cities Developed a New Plan:

As we consider ideas for improving the DC Elements of the Comprehensive Plan, it is helpful to understand what motivated other cities to develop a new, or update an existing, plan.

1) To address new policies articulated at the state or regional level:

In Seattle: The State Growth Management Act mandated Seattle to create a growth management Comprehensive Plan. Comp Plan focuses on how and where to accommodate new growth.

2) To address demographic changes occurring in and around their cities:

In Denver: The city faced substantially different circumstances at the end of the 1990s as compared to the 1980s: 1) <u>Changes in population</u>: In the 1990s, Denver began gaining population after two decades of decline. Moreover, Denver's population had not been growing nearly at the rate of surrounding jurisdictions. 2) <u>Changes in economics:</u> Denver experienced an economic downturn in the 1980s, which turned into an economic boom in 1990s. 3) <u>Changes in federal welfare program</u> required changes to the human services element.

In Minneapolis: While the metropolitan region had been growing steadily over the past 25 years, the population within the city of Minneapolis had decreased since the 1950s (although the number of households had remained relatively stable since 1950). The new plan thematically focused on becoming a growing city.

3) It was time! The Plan was old and needed new focus:

In Kansas City: Last Plan was developed in 1947 and in need of updating. The revised plan focused on: interconnected strategies, clear criteria for making decisions, and over 600 specific action items.

In Boston: Last Plan was developed in 1965. The Mayor wanted a bold new citywide plan that actively sought the involvement of people all over the city. In the face of positive attributes, the city still confronted serious challenges with traffic congestion, housing affordability, promoting new business and building new schools.

4) City charter requires that they update the Plan on an annual basis.

In Atlanta: Since 1975, the city charter mandates that they update their plan on an annual basis to reflect changes in agency and CIP priorities.

5) They Haven't but It Looks Like they Should:

In Portland: Oregon has state-mandated planning laws, where planning must be consistent with state and regional planning. Portland's original plan dates back to 1980. Since that time, sections of the plan have been amended to reflect state or regional policy changes. When asked how well they use their plan, one senior planner simply said "we really don't".

VI. Process Used for Developing the Plans:

This next section highlights the process used in developing or updating plans. While most cities relied on a variety of inputs to develop their comprehensive plan, the <u>primary input</u> driving the methodology varied from city to city. For example:

Bottom-up planning: Public developed the building blocks of each plan:

Kansas City   The plan is a policy strategy developed by over 3,000 community participants. The process started with an intensive citizen visioning process, which led to the development of major themes (policies). A Steering Committee (24 civic leaders) and seven working groups (over 350 people) then developed the seven components of the plan. There was also a strong reliance data, trends and involvement from elected officials and the mayor.

Boston   Worked with public to develop the program and direction for the physical city of Boston, including parks, neighborhoods, transit-oriented development (and what it would mean for neighborhoods). Public meetings were held in all neighborhoods, which then developed neighborhood-specific visions.

Minneapolis   While it had to meet the conditions of the Metropolitan Land Planning Act, thrust of the plan was community-driven. Met with public to determine what people wanted/needed in the future, which served as building blocks of the plan. This included city-wide meetings, special meetings for individual interest groups, public workshops and eight working groups.

Seattle   Developed an environmental priorities process where the city developed alternative scenarios. The process began with a city-wide discussion on possible futures. From there, a conceptual plan was developed followed by extensive public involvement campaign. A draft plan was then developed, which went out for public feedback. In addition to the heavy involvement from planners, two city attorneys worked full-time at the planning office to ensure that all policies were defensible and backed up by data.

Portland   Every household was contacted through mailings, including a coloring book, where people were asked to draw their own scenario and send it back to the city. Based on extensive public involvement, various agencies wrote their portion of the plan. Background documents were compiled from data.

Analysis Driven -- issues/trends focused city to develop a plan that responded to changing conditions:

Denver   Developed data and used data in discussions with the public. At the outset, Denver expected to simply update the 1989 plan, but discovered in the process that conditions had changed more dramatically than originally perceived. Over 250 citizens worked on 11 task forces throughout the development of the plan.

Development process also used a random sample survey to identify community views.

City priority/budget based:

Atlanta   Plan was driven largely from city-developed priorities, as reflected in operating and CIP budgets. A public hearing is held at the initial phase of the process to gather input. Different agencies are then responsible for authoring different chapters of the plan. The public has one other opportunity to provide feedback on the plan, which is before City Council reviews and modifies and/or approves the plan.

VII. Resources Used in Plan Development

This last section focuses on the resources required to develop new or update existing plans. These costs take three forms: total time needed for development; dollars spent for external costs, such as consultants, printing and meeting space; and internal staff time.

Overall, the average length to develop a new Comprehensive Plan was two years and 10 months. Below are more detailed descriptions of the resources used from city to city. Portland is not included on this list because that city was unable to track down this information.

Seattle – Seattle dedicated three years to develop their plan (1991-1994). The plan was primarily completed internally, with: $2.5 million spent on public involvement (staff time and presentation materials); $1.5 million on procurement, transportation models, GIS system and data reconciliation; and $4.0 million of professional and support staff (40 professionals, 20 support staff).

Atlanta – Because Atlanta updates their Plan on an annual basis their updates are more incremental in nature. In light of this, the average yearly cost amounts to a total of $123,600 with: $15,000 to print the document; $10,000 for consultant help; $5,000 for public participation; and approximately $93,600 of internal staff time (21 staff working on the update spending between 10-20% of their time on this effort).

Denver – Denver took two years to develop their plan (1998-2000). Their plan was almost entirely developed using internal staff, with 20 working on the project. Three staff were intensely involved from beginning to end including final editing; one appointee and one city council member as co-chairs; 10 staff members as chapter committee resource people; various 6-7 appointees and 2-3 council members as document steering committee once the chapter committee recommendations were complete. $200,000 was spent for hiring a process facilitator and a writer.

Minneapolis – Minneapolis took three years to develop their plan (1995-1997). They developed their plan using internal staff. Approximately $10,000 was spent on printing the plan.

Kansas City – Kansas City used between three and ten staff at various times in the process. Kansas City took five years to develop a new plan (1992-1996). Internal staff costs are estimated at $700,000.

Boston – Boston took over two years to develop their plan but it is still not officially adopted or published (1997-1999). They had two staff working on the plan full-time, with one person being a contractor. $500,000 was allocated to the plan, with a third of the budget used for developing a TOD policy.